

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

OMB-01 /084 W

----- 120214

R 170920Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9244

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3243

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, C

SUBJ: SINGAPORE SOFA

REF: STATE 153112

WE HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED DESIRABILITY SOUNDING OUT
GOS ON NEGOTIATION OF SOFA. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT IT
WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE IN OUR INTEREST TO DO SO UNDER
PRESENT CIRCUMSTATNCES. OUR REASONS ARE:

1. WE ARE TRYING TO MAINTAIN A LOW MILITARY PROFILE IN
SINGAPORE SO THAT WE DO NOT BECOME A TARGET OF POLITICAL
HARASSMENT ON PART OF GOS OR GIVE GOVERNMENT ANY
PARTICULAR LEVERAGE WHICH MIGHT BE USED AGAINST US.
WHILE OUR RELATIONSHIPS AT THE MOMENT ARE GOOD, THEY
HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN SO AND IT IS ADVISABLE FOR US TO KEEP
OUR HEADS DOWN. A SOFA, IF GOS WERE TO AGREE TO ONE
(WHICH WOULD BE HIGHLY UNLIKELY), WOULD TEND TO EMPHASIZE
OUR PRESENCE AND OUR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT HERE MORE THAN
WOULD BE DESIRABLE.

2. WE EXPECT THAT NOT MORE THAN 19 MILITARY AND 19 CIVILIAN
FOD PERSONNEL WILL BE STATIONED IN SINGAPORE IN FY 74

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(EXCLUSIVE OF DAO) AND THERE ARE NO PLANS FOR FURTHER

AUGMENTATION. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE 4 TDY CIVILIANS AT DISPOSAL FACILITY-- WHICH MAY BE CLOSED NEXT SPRING-- AND, FROM TIME TO TIME, MAY HAVE A SMALL MTT IN COUNTRY, PROBABLY NOT MORE THAN 6 OR 8 AT A TIME. OUR OVERALL NUMBER, THEREFORE, IS UNLIKELY TO EXCEED 50 EXCLUDING DAO. WE QUESTION THE NEED FOR OR UTILITY OF A SOFA FOR SUCH A SMALL CONTINGENT.

3. WHILE A SOFA WOULD NOT, OF COURSE, IMPLY ANY MILITARY COMMITMENT ON PART USG WITH RESPECT TO SINGAPORE, CONCLUSION OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT WITH GOS MIGHT BE USED BY THEM AS MEANS OF GETTING US MORE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THEIR MILITARY PROGRAMS. THEY FAVOR MAINTENANCE OF A US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION AND THEIR (UNLIKELY) ACQUIESCENCE TO A SOFA COULD BE USED BY THEM AS AN IMPLICIT US COMMITMENT OF MILITARY SUPPORT FOR SINGAPORE.

4. A SOFA WOULD SEEM TO BE INCONSISTENT WITH ASEAN'S INTEREST IN NEUTRALIZATION OF THE REGION. REACTION IN MALAYSIA WOULD BE PARTICULARLY STRONG SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN PUSHING NEUTRALIZATION IDEA. WHILE THE GOS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE PARTICULARLY MINDFUL OF MALAYSIAN SENSITIVITIES THESE DAYS, WE SHOULD TRY TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH THE GOM WOULD FIND OBJECTIONABLE.

5. SOFA WOULD ALSO APPEAR INCONSISTENT WITH SINGAPORE'S NON-ALIGNED POLICY AND APPROACH TO BIG POWER RELATIONSHIPS.

6. IN PAST YEAR, NONE OF OUR ASSIGNED MILITARY OR DOD CIVILIAN PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN COURT CASES OR HAVE HAD ANY DIFFICULTY WITH POLICE. THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR VISITING SAILORS IN COURT: ONE CASE WAS DISMISSED AND OTHERS GIVEN LIGHT FINES. SEVERAL OTHERS HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED BY POLICE FOR DISORDERLY BEHAVIOR, BUT TURNED OVER TO THEIR SHIPS' OFFICERS. IT IS OUR FEELING THAT IF WE HAD AGREEMENT ON JURISDICTION, GOS AUTHORITIES LIKELY BE SOMEWHAT HARSHER IN TREATMENT OF OUR MEN THAN IS CASE NOW WITH INFORMAL HANDLING OF CASES. ONCE AN AGREEMENT WERE CONCLUDED GIVING GOS
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JURISDICTION IN CERTAIN CASES, THEY WOULD MORE LIKELY INSIST ON JURISDICTION AND PROSECUTION SIMPLY BECAUSE A FORMAL AGREEMENT ON SUBJECT EXISTED. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL POLICE IS EXCELLENT AND IN OUR JUDGMENT WE WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO LEAVE MATTERS AS THEY ARE AND CONTINUE TO RELY ON FRIENDLY COOPERATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

7. INFORMAL 1968 AGREEMENT CITED REFTEL IS WORKING

SATISFACTORILY. THERE IS RISK THAT IF WE SEEK TO INCORPORATE ELEMENTS OF INFORMAL AGREEMENT IN SOFA WE MIGHT COME OUT WITH A MORE RESTRICTIVE ARRANGEMENT. OUR FPO ARRANGEMENT HAS NEVER BEEN APPROVED BY THE GOS AND IN COURSE OF NEGOTIATING A SOFA THIS TOO MIGHT COME INTO QUESTION.

8. RE LAST SENTENCE PARA 3 REFTL, WE THINK THERE IS NO CHANCE THAT GOS WOULD GIVE US RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHETHER PARTICULAR OFFENSE WAS IN FACT RELATED TO PERFORMANCE OF DUTY.

9. IN SUMMARY, WE THINK THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT GOS WOULD AGREE TO NEGOTIATE A SOFA AND OUR RAISING OF ISSUE MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO TAKE A HARDER LINE IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH US ON MILITARY MATTERS. WE CAN SEE NO COMPELLING NEED FOR OR ADVANTAGES IN A SOFA OVER PRESENT INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS. OUR FEELING IS THAT WE SHOULD LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.
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